

## **Week of November 11, 2002: MaineDOT Flash Facts**

### **Topic: Driving too fast for conditions**

#### **Opener and Facts:**

- Illegal or Unsafe Speed is a factor in 15% of all Maine crashes, but a factor in nearly 40% of fatal crashes.
  - 20% of the excessive speed related fatal crashes occur between midnight and 3am.
  - Excessive speed leads to the following problems:
    - ✓ Reduced time to react to hazards on the road
    - ✓ Increased braking distance
    - ✓ Reduced ability to control vehicle/or to correct maneuvering
- Any of these can mean the difference between being safe or in a crash with severe impact.
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- 182 fatal crashes resulted from driving too fast for conditions between 1999 and 2001. About two thirds of these crashes were Run Off the Road and almost another 20% were Head On crashes.
  - Illegal or unsafe speed is a particular concern for young drivers:
    - 38% of 16 to 22 year old drivers involved in Maine crashes were reported as driving too fast.
    - In fatal crashes involving speed, 42% of the drivers were aged 16 to 22.
    - From 1999 to 2001, over 4,000 teenagers involved in Maine crashes were noted as traveling at illegal or unsafe speed.
  - Do a quick mental test when you are out driving-especially when conditions are tough (such as rain, fog, or darkness) and ask yourself "If something I don't expect happens ahead, will I be able to stop in time to avoid hitting...(another vehicle, a pedestrian, a moose?)"
- Run Off Road crashes are Maine's most dangerous type of crash. Two thirds of these crashes involve excessive or illegal speed.

#### **Closer: (for every Flash Facts segment this week)**

Remember, as Flash the MaineDOT Road Model says..."We all need to slow down!"

#### **Monday:**

- The posted speed limit is one important factor for determining safe speed, but there are other considerations. Some situations where slower speed may be necessary are:
  - Terrain - curves, hills (especially at crests)
  - Visibility - Bright sun or nighttime conditions
  - Weather (this time of year brings new challenges: leaves-especially when wet, rain, ice and snow. Watch for black ice.)

#### **Tips:**

- Adjust your speed so you can:
- Read the road ahead
  - React to changing conditions (such as curves, pedestrians, entering traffic, animals, etc.)
  - Brake or maneuver when changes on the road occur and maintain vehicle control. (Unfamiliar roads may require further speed reduction)

*Prepared by:  
Safety Management  
Systems Management Division  
Bureau of Planning  
Maine Department of Transportation*

-Driver mental checklist when thinking about proper speed:

What's the condition of the road surface?

Can I react to unexpected objects in the road?

What's the condition of my vehicle? (tires, wipers, etc)

What's the weather and visibility?

If the weather's bad:

Have you **-decreased** speed?

**-increased** the distance between you and the vehicle ahead? (at least 4 seconds)

### **Wednesday:**

#### **Tips:**

Keep your vehicle at a speed where you can control it and safely use your brakes. Slow down when there is:

Rain-

Affects visibility and traction.

Hydroplaning is a concern, especially in heavy rains or rutted roads.

Braking and turning are both affected when roads are wet.

Fog-

Driving can be very disorienting, even on familiar roads

Drive so that you can stop within the distance you can see ahead

If conditions are so severe that you decide to stop – pull completely off the road into a parking area.

Ice and snow -

-Excessive speed can easily lead to loss of control, where braking and turning may be very unresponsive. Four-wheel drive can give you a false sense of security-it gives you no advantage when braking.

### **Friday:**

#### **Tips:**

In addition to weather and road conditions, here are some other situations where speed should be reduced:

-Highway Work Zones (may be lane closures or narrowed lanes, traffic detours, utility line and pole work, and moving equipment and employees. There are reduced speed limits here, and speeding fines are often doubled.)

-Residential and commercial areas. (Where traffic will be exiting and turning into driveways and at intersections.)

-Nighttime (When wildlife is especially difficult to see. Moose and deer collisions are common everywhere in the state.)

Drive defensively and watch out for problems with “the other vehicle”. Avoid having their mistake become your problem.

Make sure you travel at speeds that allow adequate reaction time and safe braking and turning in the event you need to avoid a collision.

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*Safety Management*

*Systems Management Division*

*Bureau of Planning*

*Maine Department of Transportation*